

REMARKS

I. Formalities

Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating that the Formal Drawings filed on December 19, 2000 are accepted.

Applicant also thanks the Examiner for initialing all the references cited in the PTO 1449 Form submitted with the IDS filed on March 6, 2002, as previously requested by Applicant, and for returning a copy of the aforementioned PTO 1449 Form along with the Office Action dated October 6, 2005.

II. Status of the Application

Claims 1-9 are all the claims pending in the Application, with claims 1-3 and 5 being in independent form. Claim 2 has been rejected.

The present Response addresses each point of objection and rejection raised by the Examiner. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

III. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating that claims 1 and 3-9 are allowed.

IV. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,889,324 to Kanai et al. (hereinafter “Kanai”), in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,606,609 to Houser et al. (hereinafter “Houser”). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection for *at least* the reasons set forth below.

The Examiner has rejected claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103, alleging that the Kanai reference constitutes available prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). However, Applicant submits that the priority date of the present application (September 6, 1999) is earlier than the U.S. filing date of the cited Kanai reference (November 16, 1999).

Furthermore, Applicant previously perfected the instant Application's claim of priority to Japanese Application Hei. 11-251660 by submitting a verified English language translation of Japanese Application Hei. 11-251660 along with the Response under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 filed on July 26, 2005. As a result of perfecting the instant Application's claim of priority, Kanai is not available as prior art to the instant Application under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) and, consequently, the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103 are improper.

Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw this rejection for *at least* the above reasons.

V. Conclusion

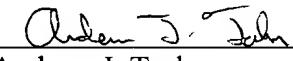
In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Response under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Serial No. 09/656,215

Attorney Docket No.: Q60744

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,


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